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RUNGE, YEVGENY Y. (LT. COL.)

Soviet 'Blake' puts Red spies in peril

From COLIN LAWSON

VITAL details on Soviet spies round the world have been handed over to the West.

They were given by Lieut.-Colonel Yevgenyi Runge, who defected from the Soviet security and espionage service, the K.G.B.

Colonel Runge is the most valuable Russian secret service man to fall into Western hands since the war. I learned today that he has outlined the extent to which individual Soviet agents have succeeded and has suggested methods to foil their further operations.

He has enough information to help British counter-intelligence officers to unmask the Moscow spy rings directed against London.

The importance of his defection to the Americans three weeks ago was summed up for me by a Western source in Germany in these words:—

"He is a great acquisition to the West—and his loss to the Russians is a fantastic blow."

PLEASED

What makes America's Central Intelligence Agency so pleased is the fact that Runge has been a professional agent for nearly 20 years—all his working life.

He is a Soviet citizen born of German parents. They moved to Russia before the 1917 Revolution, became Communists and remained loyal to the Soviets.

But Runge's defection must have raised in Russian minds grave doubts on the reliability of ALL Germans working for the K.G.B.—even second, third, and fourth generations born and brought up in the Soviet Union.

There is a strong parallel between this case and that of George Blake, the British Intelligence man who was an undercover agent for Russia and escaped to Moscow from Wormwood Scrubs Jail.

Blake gave the Russians information which damaged Britain's Intelligence services. About 40 British agents disappeared and fears were felt for their lives. Others had to be moved quickly from their operational areas.

SWITCH

Now Runge has reversed the procedure and the Russians will have to act smartly to protect their principal networks in the West.

Even as I discussed the importance of Runge's defection with my informant, news reached us that details he has given the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency are believed to have led to a new arrest of a suspected Russian spy—the sixth in three weeks.

A French schoolteacher, Jean Henel, was seized by security officers in Metz, near the German border. He is married to an East German girl. So is Runge.

The first arrests were made as a result of information given by Runge (pronounced Roonga) high over the Atlantic when he was being questioned by American security men in the plane taking him to the U.S.

A radio message went from the plane asking the authorities here in Bonn to arrest five

Germans. Four confessed to spying for Russia and one of them, 38-year-old Leonora Suetterlein, a confidential secretary in the West German Foreign Office, subsequently hanged herself in her prison cell.

The fifth suspect, the wife of the German confidential messenger at the French Embassy, was freed—she knew nothing of the espionage activities admitted by her husband, who is still under arrest.

Penetration of the French Embassy and the German Foreign Office were two of Runge's coups.

A stream of secret information went from the Foreign Office to Moscow over a period of six years. The official German code was broken. Western policies throughout the world and Western intentions in the defence field were revealed.

One of Runge's recruits was Heinz Pleschel, a German ex-sergeant in the French Foreign Legion and subsequently confidential messenger at the French Embassy in Bonn.

Pleschel took a wax impression of the key of the ambassador's safe. He handed the impression to Runge, who had a duplicate key made and passed it back to Pleschel.

Revealed

For five years Pleschel raided the safe, took out secret documents, and had them photographed for Moscow.

I learn that among these documents were the Western emergency plans to meet any Soviet-inspired crisis in Berlin. And, even more important, the Russians found out that in certain situations the Western allies would take no action at all—such as the building of the Berlin Wall.

French Ambassador François Seydoux is deeply embarrassed and may be transferred. That would place President de Gaulle in a tricky situation because Seydoux's experience in Bonn is vitally important in view of differences within the Common Market over Britain's application and German support for it.

The French have asked America for permission to interrogate Runge, but have been turned down.

The Germans come out of the affair in an even worse light. As one U.S. Intelligence man puts it: "Their Foreign Ministry is as full of holes as a sieve."

The head of West German M.I.6, Dr. Herbert Schrubbers, has flown to Washington and questioned Runge. He said Runge defected for ideological reasons and also complained: "Nobody in the K.G.B. trusts the other man."